

A portrait of an elderly man, Dwight Lamb, wearing glasses and a colorful plaid shirt. He is holding a violin and bow, looking directly at the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a music room or studio.

NOTES

80

DWIGHT LAMB

Nate Kemperman

Amber Gaddy & David Cavins

In 1996, Iowa held its sesquicentennial celebration; many of its noted citizens, including Dwight Lamb, represented the state at festivities in Washington, DC and closer to home. It was an honor and a time to remember for Dwight, but he says that maybe the best part of that memorable summer was being stopped at the Iowa State Fair Sesquicentennial showcase by a slender, earnest young fiddler who introduced himself as Nate Kemperman. A few weeks later, Nate sent a letter asking if Dwight would be willing to mentor him under an Iowa Traditional Arts Apprenticeship; Dwight agreed, and not long after, Nate loaded up his fiddle—and David and Amber—for a visit. The four of us have been playing music together ever since.

In the spring of 2014, nearly 20 years later, under the shadows of the Loess Hills and the light of a big, brilliant prairie sky, a party gathered in Onawa, Iowa to celebrate Dwight's 80th birthday. There were musicians, dancers, and friends. Some had not yet started kindergarten; others remember Dwight in his own school days. Some have rarely left Monona County, others came from across the Atlantic. As we celebrated—with food and music and stories—we came to discuss how lucky we all are to have such good times and such a great community.

Our friendships span two decades, four states and who knows how many tunes. We consider ourselves incredibly fortunate to have such a foundation in our lives, and this recording is intended not only as a record of some rare tunes, but also as a celebration in itself of the hundreds of hours we've happily spent together, and the hundreds of tunes we've played: in Dwight's back room, at dances and on stages, in parks and on porches, in basements and out behind the barn.

We're having a great time, and we hope you will join us if you're ever in the neighborhood.

ABOUT THIS RECORDING

Many recordings of traditional music celebrate the past, and that's a wonderful aim, but this particular recording intends to celebrate our present; this is Missouri Valley traditional music as it is in 2015, with our history behind us and the 21st century ahead. The Missouri Valley, which was a major corridor for early colonization of the West, as well as a major steamboat-era supply route, stewed a melting pot of musical influences from Kentucky to Bohemia to Scandinavia. We've inherited a patchwork of music that's been livening up dances and parlors and stages for hundreds of years, and continues to do so.

We have made some conscious choices in both tunes and instrumentation for this recording. Some of these tunes we play nearly every time we get

together; others have come in and out of fashion with us over the years, sometimes surfacing unexpectedly in our brains or fingers. We've tried to give a feel for the variety of tunes we play in a typical session, which might meander through several keys and time signatures in a single hour.

While single fiddle melody plus chorded accompaniment is the most common format in our tradition these days, we've included some doubled (and tripled!) melody because that's what we do. Doubled melody, and even harmony, are not without precedent in Missouri Valley fiddle, and can be heard on several recordings from before the 1960s, when fiddle contests started shaping the sound.

*Gathered for Dwight's 80th.
Left: Kristian Bugge, Mette
Jensen, Liz Amos, Bill Peter-
son, Nate, Dwight, Amber,
Matthew Andree, David*





Goldie Walters plays pump organ with her husband Bob Walters. This organ is now in Dwight Lamb's music room.

We've also included a smorgasbord of instruments, though we wouldn't typically play all in a single sitting, to give a feel for the variety we use. While in many parts of the country fiddle-banjo and later fiddle-banjo-guitar were and are overwhelmingly the most common orchestration for fiddle music, in the Missouri Valley it was—and is—not unusual to hear pump organ or piano. You also might hear

tenor banjo or tenor guitar, cello, or chorded fiddle as rhythm.

“Parlor” pump organs were once widely available, lightweight and movable (unlike a piano), fairly durable, and a genteel choice for a lady to play as well as a gentleman. “Portable” pump organs, locally called melodeons, were also quite popular; they

fold to the size of a large suitcase. Piano accordion is an unusual choice, but melodeons have sadly become quite hard to find, perhaps due to the fact that they were carted all over the countryside. Accordion has a similar sound at an even smaller size. Dwight tells us Bohemian bands were common in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska up through the 1950s—we hope they would approve.

ABOUT DWIGHT

Dwight Lamb has learned a thing or two, living in the fertile lowlands of western Iowa for most of his eighty years. He is kind, fair-minded, soft-spoken, and sharp as a tack—he can tell you what tunes he played in his first major fiddle contest, at Brownville, NE in 1961, as easily as he rattles off his great-grandson's Tae Kwon Do schedule. He is very much an Iowan, in all the best ways—rigorously polite but also determined and a bit stubborn, which is absolutely necessary in order to travel internationally at the age of 79. He's taught us to listen for the best in every bit of music we hear. As all the best musicians do, he looks for what he can learn from everyone.

Much has been written elsewhere about Dwight's life and musical formation. In this recording, we will just say that he's a gentleman of the very finest mettle and one we're proud to call mentor, role model, and friend.

Dwight would like to add: "It's been a wonderful experience working with these three young people (who are very fine musicians) the last few years and especially on this CD. They are so nice to work with and very good at what they do. It's very nice to find people like this that can put up with an old guy like me."

*Kim Lansford, Nate Kemperman
and Dwight Lamb play at the
2010 Bob Walters Day.*



THE TUNES

1. Big-Horned Cattle

From Cyril Stinnett. Cyril Stinnett is a well-known Missouri Valley fiddler from Fillmore, MO. He learned this tune, and many others, from his dad's humming. Cyril said his father even hummed the 32nd notes.

2. D Quadrille

piano

From Bob Walters. "Uncle Bob" was another well-known Missouri Valley fiddler, Dwight's mentor, and the source of many tunes. A great dance quadrille.



3. Art Wooten's Hornpipe

piano

From Art Wooten. Art, who originally lived in eastern Nebraska and later moved to western Nebraska, was a friend and contemporary of Bob Walters. This is one of two great tunes from Art Wooten, the other is called, imaginatively, *Art Wooten's Quadrille*. In the golden age of AM radio, when many Midwesterners were learning tunes from Canadian radio fiddlers, apparently the reverse was true, too. We recently heard the grandson of a well-known Canadian fiddler playing *Art Wooten's Quadrille*. He calls it *Wooten's Jig*.

4. Bob Walters' G Waltz

From Bob Walters. Learned from a tape recorded by Alfred Gray, another local fiddler and friend of Dwight's.

5. Fort Smith

From Cyril Stinnett. Cyril got this tune from hearing Georgia Slim Rutland on the radio. It was the first tune Dwight played for Nate, and has remained one of Nate's favorites.

Dwight's backup at this session includes tenor banjo, piano, and archtop guitar.

6. Irish Cobbler

From Casey Jones. Casey was once perhaps the most widely known Missouri Valley fiddler, due to his stint playing on AM radio station KFNF out of Shenandoah, IA. Dwight says that Casey was his father's favorite fiddler; both of them learned many tunes from him, including this one. This is also the first tune Amber ever saw Dwight play and the second she learned from him.

7. Grand Army Quadrille

piano

From Bob Walters. Bob reported that a lot of fiddlers around Decatur, NE once played this quadrille. They must have had what sports fans call a "deep bench," to have several fiddlers who could manage the *Grand Army*!

8. Casey's in A

pump organ

From Casey Jones. Bob Walters played this tune as well; perhaps Bob and Casey played it together on occasion. We hope so: their double-fiddle work is spine-tingling.

9. Give the Fiddler a Dram

From Bob Walters. Not to be confused with *Danced All Night With a Bottle in My Hand*.

10. Cumberland Gap

From Bob Walters. An unusual version of a nearly universal tune.

11. Chris Jerup's Polka in G and D

pump organ, tenor banjo

From Dwight's Grandpa Jerup. He played this on fiddle; he never learned it on the buttonbox because it's in the wrong keys.

12. Norwegian Waltz

pump organ

From Sol Harris. A common waltz in Dwight's younger years. Dwight's Dad learned it from Sol Harris, who was of Norwegian extraction and lived in the Soldier and Moorhead, IA area. Dwight reports that Sol's brother Guy Harris, also a fiddler, played some really nice 6/8 pieces. Sol also gave us a great version of *Wart on the Pumphandle*, which we call *Sol's Wart*.

Unless otherwise noted, Dwight and Nate play fiddle on all of the tunes, Amber plays banjo or piano accordion and David plays guitar. Other instruments are listed.



*What a jam session this must have been!
From left: Sant Walters, Bob Walters, Hiram Allen, Ed Mahoney, Floyd Davis, Casey Jones, Frame Davis*

13. Love Somebody *mandolin, piano*

From Bob Walters. Dwight learned this tune from Bob Christeson's LPs of interviews with Bob Walters. We all owe Bob Christeson a debt for his work recording Bob Walters' huge repertoire.

14. Mahoney's Reel

From Ed Mahoney. Ed Mahoney was a big guy who fiddled hard and fast, and also played a mean tenor guitar. He

composed two tunes that have come to us: this one in D and another in A, called *Ed Mahoney's Tune*. He was sheriff at Fall City, NE, near the Missouri line. It was Ed who introduced Dwight Lamb to Cyril Stinnett at the 1961 Brownville, NE fiddle contest. Dwight asked if Cyril would fiddle him a tune, and Cyril obligingly played *Jack Danielson's Reel*, which remains a Missouri standard.

15. Fox Chase

From Bob Walters. Dwight's heard Missourians play something that shares two parts with this tune, but replaces the bass part with a different high part. They call it *Redbird*. Cyril Stinnett played all five parts together.

16. Crooked Quadrille

From Bob Walters. We named this one, because it's rather unusual for a quadrille to depart from standard phrasing... although by sheer chance, we've included two such quadrilles on this record. (*Bill Gray's Quadrille* is the other.)



17. Spring Valley Jig/Aunt Maudie's Quadrille

mandolin, piano

From Clarence Lamb, Dwight's father. *Spring Valley Jig* is a name we gave to one of Dwight's dad's 6/8 pieces, which we learned after a beautiful drive up to Spring Valley Cemetery, where Dwight's family, the Jerups, are buried. *Aunt Maudie's Quadrille* is named for Dwight's Aunt Maudie Poling, who played only this one tune on the piano.

18. Duncan's Reel

From Wilse Walters, Bob's dad. Bob Walters said his dad brought this tune home around 1909. We say that it's guaranteed to get dancers on their feet, and that it's one of our all-time favorites to play together.

19. Clarence Lamb's Polka in D and G

From Clarence Lamb. Dwight tells us there was a gentleman at their local dance that requested this tune as *Sugar in the Coffee-O*, but it doesn't sound like any *Sugar in the Coffee-O* we've ever heard.

Amber and Nate at the Ellington Piano



Pate Simmons stands in the center of the top row in this photograph of the KFNF entertainers. To the right of Pate stand the Monroe Brothers. Casey Jones is the top row's right bookend.

20. Pate Simmons' Schottische

mandolin, pump organ, tenor banjo

From Casey Jones. Pate Simmons was a radio announcer at KFNF-AM, Shenandoah, IA while Casey was playing on air. This tune, which Casey learned from his dad, was Pate's favorite. Pate had Casey play it every chance he got, so it became known as *Pate Simmons' Schottische*. Casey fancied this tune up in his later years, but we play the more dance-friendly version.

21. Clyde Durst's Tune in F and B♭ *pump organ*

From Clyde Durst (sometimes spelled Dirst). Dwight knew Clyde as an older person, when he lived behind the community hall in Ticonic, IA as its caretaker. He'd once been a semi-pro

baseball pitcher, and there are numerous stories of his hijinks. We play several tunes learned from Clyde.

22. Stephens' Waltz #2 *piano*

From Bob Walters. To answer the eternal question: yes, there was a *Stephens' Waltz #1*. Bob eventually discovered that the title of *Stephens' Waltz #1* was *Friendship Waltz*; by that name, it's still commonly played by Missouri Valley and Little Dixie fiddlers. The "proper" name for the second Stephens Waltz remains a mystery.

23. Dark-Haired Girl

pump organ, nylon-strung banjo

From Wilse Walters. Bob Walters and his brother Sant (Alexander), himself a fine fiddler, played this tune a lot.

24. Bill Gray's Quadrille

pump organ

From Bill Gray. Bill Gray had a farm near Dwight's grandfather, Chris Jerup. Dwight's father and grandfather learned quite a few tunes from him, including this rather martial quadrille, and another perennial favorite, *Over the Ocean Waves Quadrille*. Bill Gray was the brother of Taylor Gray, another local fiddler, and uncle of Alfred Gray, from whom we also have several tunes.

25. Bob's Tune in G

piano

From Bob Walters. Bob, along with Ed Mahoney, learned this from sheet music found at a contest in Shenandoah. Sounds to us like a close cousin to the *Wabash Cannonball*.

26. Inimitable Reel

pump organ

Dwight doesn't remember when he learned this tune. He does, however, remember that this is the tune Jim Lansford, another well-known Missouri fiddler, was playing the hot summer day they met, under a tree at Bethel, MO.

27. Little Red Barn

pump organ, tenor guitar

From a cylinder record from Dwight's childhood. When his family moved to town, the cylinders and player were left behind, but the tune came along, in Dwight's head. On the record, it was called *The Old Red Barn Medley*, so it may be a combination of two tunes. Bob Walters also played it, and some Canadians play it, too, without the fifth part.

28. Tugboat

From Bob Walters. This rip-roaring reel version is a ways off from the more commonly heard Texas contest-style version, as popularized by Benny Thomassen.

29. Rock All the Babies to Sleep

buttonbox, mandolin, piano

From the radio. Dwight and Amber both play buttonbox on this pop tune from the early 20th century. It was also recorded, with words, by Jimmie Rodgers (1932), Riley Puckett (1924), and others. Popularized as a fiddle tune by southern Missouri radio fiddler Lonnie Robertson, *Rock All the Babies to Sleep* is part of Dwight's rarely-heard American buttonbox repertoire.

OUR INSTRUMENTS

Dwight Lamb plays his father's bow, which has a lovely and unusual ivory frog, and Bob Walters' fiddle. He also plays a one-row Hohner diatonic accordion gifted to him by a fan who heard him play in Denmark.

Nate Kemperman plays a 2000 Köhr violin, fine-tuned by guitar player Alvie Dooms of Ava, MO, and a souped-up Kentucky mandolin.

Amber Gaddy plays a Titano piano accordion, a turn-of-the-century Ellington upright piano, a circa 1880 Story & Clark pump organ rescued from an auction by Missouri fiddler Howard Marshall, a walnut banjo with wooden tone ring built by David,

an 1890s Stewart Special Thoroughbred banjo with nylon strings, and a two-row Hohner diatonic accordion.

David Cavins plays two handbuilt Cavins guitars: a red spruce and red maple small-body six-string and a red spruce and cherry tenor guitar based on Dwight's friend Lloyd Snow's outstanding 1929 Gibson TG-o. He also plays a great-sounding no-name tenor banjo.

Amber learned to play buttonbox from Dwight; they play together on Rock All the Babies to Sleep.

